



## INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

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Testimony of Tiana Lee Ocasio-Nesmith

Marketing Representative of IUOE Local 478

for the Labor and Public Employees Committee

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Good afternoon, Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and the other Honorable members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Tiana Lee Ocasio-Nesmith and I am a marketing Representative and referral assistant for the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 478, a labor organization that represents over 3,000 members and their families in Connecticut. I'm here to testify in opposition of SB 990 on behalf of my brother and sister construction workers here in Connecticut .

If you are thinking about changing, Connecticut's prevailing wage law, then I ask you to first consider how this law has positively impacted the lives of other women and minorities who are gainfully employed in the construction industry.

At IUOE Local 478, we pride ourselves in serving our membership by providing top of the line training for our members. Our members are highly skilled and we have an outstanding apprenticeship-training program. This program offers 6,000 hours of classroom and hands-on training on heavy construction equipment.

The prevailing wage has allowed most of our members the opportunity to own a home, provide for their families and pay taxes. We do not plan to go from one social program to another and rely on the government to make ends meet. We consider ourselves net contributors to the community rather than net collectors. I

The prevailing wage allows individuals, especially women and minorities, to be trained for work in the construction industry and assure that we receive pay

equal to every other tradesmen. A portion of our hourly wage, which is negotiated with the contractor, is invested in training programs in the construction industry; the same kind of training that our operators receive. The training of the workers results in quality workmanship and more efficient, productive employees who are able to complete the job, on time and on budget.

Many non-union construction workers that I've spoken with want to earn the prevailing wage for the same reason our operators do: they're underpaid for the difficult work and harsh weather they must endure; they lack the skilled training needed to grow in the industry; and they do not have the healthcare and pension benefits enjoyed by others who do the same work.

This action would jeopardize the future of training and apprenticeship programs that women have benefited from and threaten to take away the wages that have helped us improve our quality of life.

On behalf of the tens of thousands of construction workers who benefit from the prevailing wage law – especially women and minorities – Both Union and Non-union, I urge you to stop any efforts to change the law. Other women like myself, who are employed in the construction industry, are depending on you.

Thank you